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Testimony of

Nina M. Wolfson, President  
New Haven Federation of Teachers Retiree Chapter

Appropriations Committee  
March 24, 2011

**SB 1122 An Act Permitting Payment of Union Dues from Teachers' Retirement Payments**

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. My name is Nina M. Wolfson and I am the President of the New Haven Federation of Teachers Retiree Chapter, we represent 174 current members with the potential membership of at least 500. I am here to testify in favor of SB 1122, An Act Permitting Payment of Union Dues from Teachers' Retirement Payments.

One of our missions as a retiree chapter is to keep our members informed of local, state and national issues that affect retirees and changes to those issues as they occur. Another is to add our voice and support to millions of retired and older Americans so that all our needs are heard loud and strong and are acknowledged in a positive and active way.

Our members have been a strong voice in our community both on the state and national level and will continue to be heard. However, for many reasons, our teachers are "lost" once they become retirees. By participating in a voluntary program that allows for automatic dues deduction our membership would not only increase immediately but would continue to do so annually.

The voluntary automatic deduction is a convenience many of our current members have requested over the years. Retired state employees already benefit from this convenience of automatic dues deduction. If we had such a program, it would allow our chapter to focus on issues relevant to our membership, rather than spend countless hours in annual solicitation and collection of dues.

We believe this is a matter of fairness. Automatic monthly deductions from state retirement checks have been made for years by the Office of the State Comptroller. Apparently, their system which is voluntary works well, is convenient and easy to implement. This could work just as easily for retired teachers and the Teachers' Retirement Board. Like state workers, we participate in a state administered pension system and are entitled to participate in the same process to collect our union dues.

I urge you to support SB 1122 and provide our retired teachers the very same benefit you have afforded the retired state employees.

Thank you for your consideration. I shall be happy to answer any questions.